

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC



JULY 12, 2011

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S. RELATIONS

Prince Saud Al-Faisal receives U.S. official

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal received visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Jeffrey Feltman in Jeddah on July 6. The officials reviewed bilateral relations and discussed international current events. Feltman met the same day with Minister of Culture and Information Dr. Abdulaziz Khoja. He was accompanied on his consultations by U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom James Smith and U.S. Consul General in Jeddah Thomas Danny.

U.S. Medical Licensing Examination to be available in the Kingdom

The Secretary General of the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS), Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Sayegh, and the Assistant Executive President for Exams and Programs of the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), Dr. Peter Scholes, recently signed an agreement to provide the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE Step 1.2) in the Kingdom. According to Dr. Al-Sayegh, the two sides are discussing the possibility of combining their expertise and resources in order to develop comprehensive assessment programs in Saudi Arabia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Prince Saud Al-Faisal holds press conference

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal held a joint press conference with British Foreign Secretary William Haig at the Foreign Ministry's Jeddah branch on July 5, during which he addressed current events in the Middle East.

Prince Saud expressed satisfaction with the restoration of security and stability in Bahrain. He also welcomed the launch of a comprehensive national dialogue and the formation of a fact-finding committee to investigate the recent unrest. The Kingdom, he noted, supports the serious reforms being undertaken by Bahrain and rejects foreign interference in the affairs of Gulf states. Prince Saud expressed sorrow over the deaths of civilians, including women and children, caused by regional crises. He called on all parties to act wisely, avoid bloodshed and enact reforms that not only guarantee human rights, but also guarantee the security, unity and independence of Arab countries.

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Regarding the Mideast Peace Process, the Saudi Foreign Minister stated, "We support the international community's effort to revive the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis on the basis of beginning with border and security negotiations, to pave the way for dealing with other fundamentals, led by the [issue of Jerusalem], within no more than one year so that negotiators can achieve the establishment of an independent, viable Palestinian state within a two-state solution." He stressed that peacemaking efforts will fall short unless Israeli intransigence is seriously and firmly addressed.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi Red Crescent provides ambulances for Darfur

The Saudi Red Crescent (SRC) handed over a third batch of ambulances on July 6 to Sudanese authorities as a gift from the Kingdom in support of humanitarian efforts in Darfur. SRC Director General of International Affairs Prince Abdullah bin Faisal bin Farhan delivered the gift to Sudanese Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs Dr. Mutraf Siddiq at a special ceremony in Khartoum. Siddiq welcomed the aid, noting that there are 21 health centers and 21 wells run by the SRC benefiting more than 800,000 people in the three states of Darfur. The SRC now covers 30 percent of the needs of the people of Darfur, he added. The event was attended by Sudan government officials, representatives of international humanitarian organizations and Saudi Embassy staff members.

Kingdom provides dates to Muslims in the Philippines

The Saudi Embassy in Manila gifted 100 tons of dates to the Filipino government on July 7 to mark the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The dates were received by officials from the Commission of Muslim Affairs during a ceremony.

Saudi Ambassador to Bosnia participates in surgery center opening

Saudi Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina Eid Althaqafi recently attended the opening of Sarajevo University's Heart Surgery Center. The Kingdom supported the creation of the center through a \$14.45 million soft loan provided by the Saudi Development Fund.

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FOREIGN RELATIONS

Kingdom welcomes independence of South Sudan

During its weekly meeting held in Jeddah on July 18, the Cabinet welcomed the establishment of the state of South Sudan and declared the Kingdom's readiness to establish diplomatic relations with the new country. The ministers expressed their hope that peace and mutual respect prevail between Sudan and South Sudan, in order to achieve prosperity and security in the region.

King Abdullah offers condolences to Afghan President

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz spoke with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on July 16 to offer his condolences regarding the death of President Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai. .

SAUDI ARABIA

SPA launches Facebook page

The Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the official news agency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, launched a page on the social networking site, Facebook. SPA's interactive page will link users with the latest local and international news in Arabic and English and also will feature images. Current political, economic, social and sports news will be updated regularly. To visit SPA's Facebook page, go to <http://www.facebook.com/spa.gov>.

Spain on track to win \$10b train contract

A consortium of 13 Spanish companies, led by Renfe Railways, is reportedly in the final stages of signing a \$1.0 billion contract to build the high-speed Saudi Railways Organization's Al-Haramain Projects, a 280-mile track linking the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah via Jeddah, the Saudi Gazette reported on Tuesday. The business newspaper El Economista reported on Monday that Spanish Transport Minister Jose Blanco confirmed to members of the consortium that the Spanish bid is in a good position, but it is not yet finalized. Saudi Railways Organization officials had no comment at this time.

In February 2008, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz ordered that the construction of the Makkah-Madinah rail project be

financed by Saudi specialized funds, a move that was expected to speed up implementation of the project. The Makkah-Madinah rail project includes five stations, two each in Makkah and Jeddah and one in Madinah. Once completed, the railway is expected to transport millions of travelers and positively impact the region's economy.

FOREIGN AID

WAMY medical camp conducts 500 eye surgeries in Mali

A medical camp set up in Mali by the Office of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) recently conducted 500 eye surgeries on patients suffering from cataracts. The camp's medical committee also conducted free checkups for 2,500 eye patients. Ophthalmologists, including those from Saudi Arabia, took part in the seven-day event.

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